

Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of enhancing a voice mail-messages message for
2 playback to a listener, further comprising steps of:

3 creating a voice mail message for a listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the voice
4 mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

5 identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message segments
6 which are to have background sound associated therewith;

7 selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the telephone
8 device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the sounds selected
9 as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different sounds; and

10 storing a voice mail message;

11 separately storing a background sound that has been selected for incorporating with the
12 voice mail message;

13 responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the stored voice mail message,
14 playing back at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to be
15 associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound selected
16 as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified message segments, and wherein
17 the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back identified
18 message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for the voice
19 mail message changes at least once during the playback, incorporating the separately-stored
20 background sound with the stored voice mail message; and
21 playing back a result of the incorporating step.

Claims 2 - 8 (canceled)

1 Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-specific personal
3 identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal identification value
4 causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically
5 selected, without intervention by the caller. ~~background sound is selected programmatically;~~
6 ~~based on a speaker-specific, device-independent identifier provided by a speaker of the voice mail~~
7 ~~message.~~

Claim 10 (canceled)

1 Claim 11 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message, wherein
3 the caller-specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds on
4 which days; and wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-
5 specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the
6 sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected, based
7 on the day on which the voice mail message is created. ~~selected background sound is~~
8 ~~programmatically selected from among a plurality of background sounds, based on a date on~~
9 ~~which a speaker leaves the voice mail message for storing.~~

Claims 12 - 13 (canceled)

1 Claim 14 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected
2 background-sound is sounds are selected randomly from a plurality of available background
3 sounds.

1 Claim 15 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and
3 wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-specific profile,
4 responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the sounds to be
5 associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected according to the
6 profile, without intervention by the caller, background-sound is selected using a profile associated
7 with a speaker of the voice mail message, without intervention of the speaker.

Claim 16 (canceled)

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a plurality of sounds
3 which are statically configured as sounds selectable ~~selected~~ background sound is selected based
4 on its having been configured as a device-specific selection to be used with voice mail messages
5 from [[a]] the telephone device ~~from which the stored voice mail message originates.~~

1 Claim 18 (currently amended): The method according to Claim [[2]] 1, wherein the ~~one or more~~
2 ~~selected background sounds are dynamically selected, by a speaker of the voice mail message;~~
3 ~~from among a plurality of background sounds that are available to, and offered to the caller by, an~~
4 ~~apparatus on which the voice mail message is stored~~ being recorded.

Claim 19 (canceled)

1 Claim 20 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 transmitting the selected background ~~[[sound]]~~ sounds from ~~[[a]]~~ the telephone device ~~used by a~~
3 ~~speaker of to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded~~.

1 Claim 21 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 20, wherein the selected
2 ~~background sound has been~~ sounds are compressed prior to the transmitting.

1 Claim 22 (currently amended): The method according to Claim [[2]] 1, further comprising the
2 step of wherein the plurality of selected background sounds are selected by transmitting, for each
3 of the selected sounds, an identifier ~~identifiers~~ thereof from ~~[[a]]~~ the telephone device ~~used by a~~
4 ~~speaker of to an apparatus on which~~ the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the
5 apparatus to obtain the played-back sounds.

1 Claim 23 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of

2 wherein the selected background sound is selected by transmitting, for each of the selected
3 sounds, an address thereof from ~~[[a]] the telephone device used by a speaker of to an apparatus~~
4 on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address for each of
5 the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back ~~containing the selected~~
6 background sound.

1 Claims 24 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 23, wherein at least one of the
2 transmitted address addresses is a Uniform Resource Locator.

Claims 25 - 27 (canceled)

1 Claim 28 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises the step of selecting at least one of the sounds ~~the selected background sound~~
3 ~~has been selected~~ using one of: a dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) capability of ~~[[a]] the~~
4 telephone device; ~~used by a speaker of the voice mail message~~; a touch-sensitive display screen of
5 the telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone device; or a voice
6 recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the voice mail
7 message ~~for storing~~.

Claims 29 - 33 (canceled)

1 Claim 34 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a

listener, further comprising steps of:

creating a voice mail message for a listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

~~storing a voice mail message as a plurality of message segments;~~

selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file to insert ~~separately storing one or more audio files, each of which has been selected for inserting into~~ the voice mail message (1) between one or more selected pairs of successive ones of the message segments, (2) prior to a first one of the message segments, and/or (3) following a last one of the message segments, such that ~~each of~~ the selected audio ~~[[files]]~~ file is associated with the selected pair(s) of message segments, the first one of the message segments, and/or the last one of the message segments, ~~and/or the selected pair(s) of message segments~~, respectively; and

inserting ~~each of~~ the selected audio ~~[[files]]~~ file between the successive ones of the message segments in its associated pair(s), prior to the associated first one of the message segments, and/or following the associated last one of the message segments, as appropriate, as the voice mail message is played back to the listener.

Claims 35 - 36 (canceled)

Claim 37 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 34, wherein ~~at least one of~~ the audio ~~[[files]]~~ file is an audio signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.

Claims 38 - 42 (canceled)

1 Claim 43 (withdrawn): A method of merchandising pre-recorded sound files, further comprising
2 steps of:

3 marketing a telephone device that has one or more pre-recorded sound files locally
4 accessible, such that telephone calls initiated from the telephone device can be delivered to
5 recipients with one or more of the pre-recorded sound files blended with a voice message of the
6 initiated telephone call.

Claims 44 - 89 (canceled)

1 Claim 90 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein a telephone call
2 placed by the ~~speaker~~ caller for creating the voice mail message is transparently extended, without
3 intervention of the ~~speaker~~ caller, following the ~~speaker's caller's~~ completion of the voice mail
4 message, and wherein the ~~transmission~~ transmitting occurs during the transparent extension, after
5 which the transparently-extended telephone call is automatically ended.

1 Claim 91 (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 43, wherein different telephone devices
2 are marketed that have different collections of pre-recorded sound files.

Claims 92 - 95 (canceled)

1 Claim 96 (new): A method of enabling sound files to be blended with a voice message,
2 comprising steps of:

3 statically configuring a telephone device with a plurality of pre-recorded sound files; and
4 upon initiating a telephone call from the telephone device, blending at least one of the pre-
5 recorded sound files with a voice message of the initiated telephone call.

1 Claim 97 (new): The method according to Claim 96, wherein the at least one pre-recorded sound
2 files blended with the voice message are selected by a caller who initiates the telephone call.

1 Claim 98 (new): The method according to Claim 96, wherein the at least one pre-recorded sound
2 files are blended as background for the voice message.